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# The New Security: Fences to Flowerpots

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WASHINGTON, May 17 — A week ago, the shopping concourse inside the Pentagon became officially off-limits to the public.

At the Smithsonian's Air and Space Museum on the Mall, guards now check the purses and briefcases of all visitors and staff. "Even though I'm the deputy director of the museum and the guards know me, they look through my briefcase every morning," said Don Lopez.

Some of the blossoms that bloomed here this spring did so in huge concrete flowerpots used as barriers to vehicles around such buildings as the Capitol and the Pentagon.

The signs are sometimes subtle, sometimes as obvious as a few flowers poking from a mass of concrete whose function is as forboding as its form. Washington, long a city of comparatively free and easy access, has become preoccupied with security and the threat of terrorism.

Few people here are willing to question the need for stepped-up security, particularly in the aftermath of the United States raid on Libya and the terrorist attacks abroad in recent years. But officials can face troublesome questions as they try to protect the capital without putting off the American people, who flock to this city with a justifiably proprietary air.

That dilemma is evident on Capitol Hill, where members of Congress are discussing a proposal to install a fence around the Capitol. "It's very hard," said Representative James J. Howard, the New Jersey Democrat who is chairman of the House Public Works and Transportation Committee. "Here, you've got all the politicians. They want people to seem welcome. I want to do something, but I don't want to go too far."

"The real frustration," Mr. Howard added, "is that it's very difficult to really secure a place without pushing the people around."

This is, after all, not just a seat of government, but a tourist attraction, a kind of theme park for democracy. And 1986 is shaping up as a healthy year for tourism in the capital, in part because fear of terrorism abroad is expected to prompt many American vacations at home, officials say.

In the days after the bombing attack on Libya, a few school groups canceled tours they had scheduled at some of the 12 Smithsonian museums here, officials said. But the vacancies were quickly filled, and the number of visitors is running well above last year's level.

George Berklacy, a National Park Service spokesman, reports that the agency's "security sensitivity" has been heightened. He added, "The parkland in the nation's capital is quite safe, in our judgment."

The Smithsonian museums have imposed new security procedures, including tighter checks at the doors for both visitors and staff. "Everybody seems to be taking it with good grace," said Mary Combs, a spokesman for the Smithsonian. "It's sort of like airport checks. People are happy to know you're taking these steps."

Visitors to the capital can still take tours of the Pentagon, but a variety of new security measures have been added at that sprawling complex.

The decision to restrict the 16 stores in the Pentagon's shopping concourse to Pentagon employees and others with Defense Department passes was made some time ago, well before the raid on Libya, a spokesman said. And most customers were already Pentagon employees, he added.

The State Department plans to spend \$4 million on security improvements at its main building. In the past two years, the department has increased the number of guards, installed barriers to vehicles and expanded use of metal detectors and closed-circuit television monitors, an official recently told a Congressional panel.

The White House acquired concrete barriers around its fence after the 1983 truck-bombing of the Marine compound in Beirut. Now, workers are converting East Executive Avenue, between the White House and the Treasury Building, into a pedestrian mall. Security was a factor, officials say.

Out in suburban Virginia, at the headquarters of the Central Intelligence Agency, more gates and

metal barriers have been installed at entrances. Huge boulders have been scattered in one area to deny access to any intruding vehicle, though at first glance they seem to be nothing more than part of a huge rock garden.

The new security consciousness is not confined to governmental Washington. Kastle Systems Inc., a company that provides electronic security systems to commercial office buildings, has experienced a sharp increase in business in the Washington area over the past year, an official said. "The perception in the market is, 'Let's get more security,'" said Jeff Kolodin, national sales manager.

The security issue is a cause for some sadness among longtime Washingtonians who remember more innocent times when a flowerpot was just a flowerpot. "There is no doubt we have to prepare ourselves a little bit better than we have in regard to possible terrorist attacks," Mr. Howard said.

Still, he said he wonders: "If we start doing these things, have the terrorists won? And how do we do it without separating people from their Capitol?"